Top-Down Decarbonization

EES 3310/5310

Global Climate Change

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Class #27: Friday March 20 2020

Considerations on Projections of Future Emissions

Grain of Salt

- Implied decarbonization rates depend on predictions of P, G, etc.
- Predicting population and economic growth are very tricky and imprecise.
- So take any of these calculations with a grain of salt.
- But are they still useful, despite the uncertainties?

Implied Decarbonization for Green New Deal

Kaya Identity

$$F = P \times g \times e \times f$$

- $F =$ emissions (million metric tons (MMT) CO_2 per year)
- $P =$ population (billions)
- $g =$ per-capita GDP ($1000 per person)
- $e =$ energy intensity of economy (quads / $ trillion)
  - Reducing e means increasing **energy efficiency**
- $f =$ carbon intensity of energy supply (MMT CO_2 / quad)
  - Reducing f means **replacing fossil fuels** with cleaner energy

US Green New Deal

US Green New Deal

- The Green New Deal has many definitions:
  - Resolution in Congress does not give specific emissions targets.
  - Bernie Sanders promises complete elimination of CO_2 emissions by 2050 and 71% reduction by 2030
    - $F(2030) = 1492$ MMT
    - $F(2018) = 5145$ MMT
    - Can we do this in 12 years?
      - We would have to cut *ef* by 12.8% per year.
      - Historically, since 1990, *ef* has dropped 2.4% per year.

How Can We Decarbonize?

Detailed Abatement Options

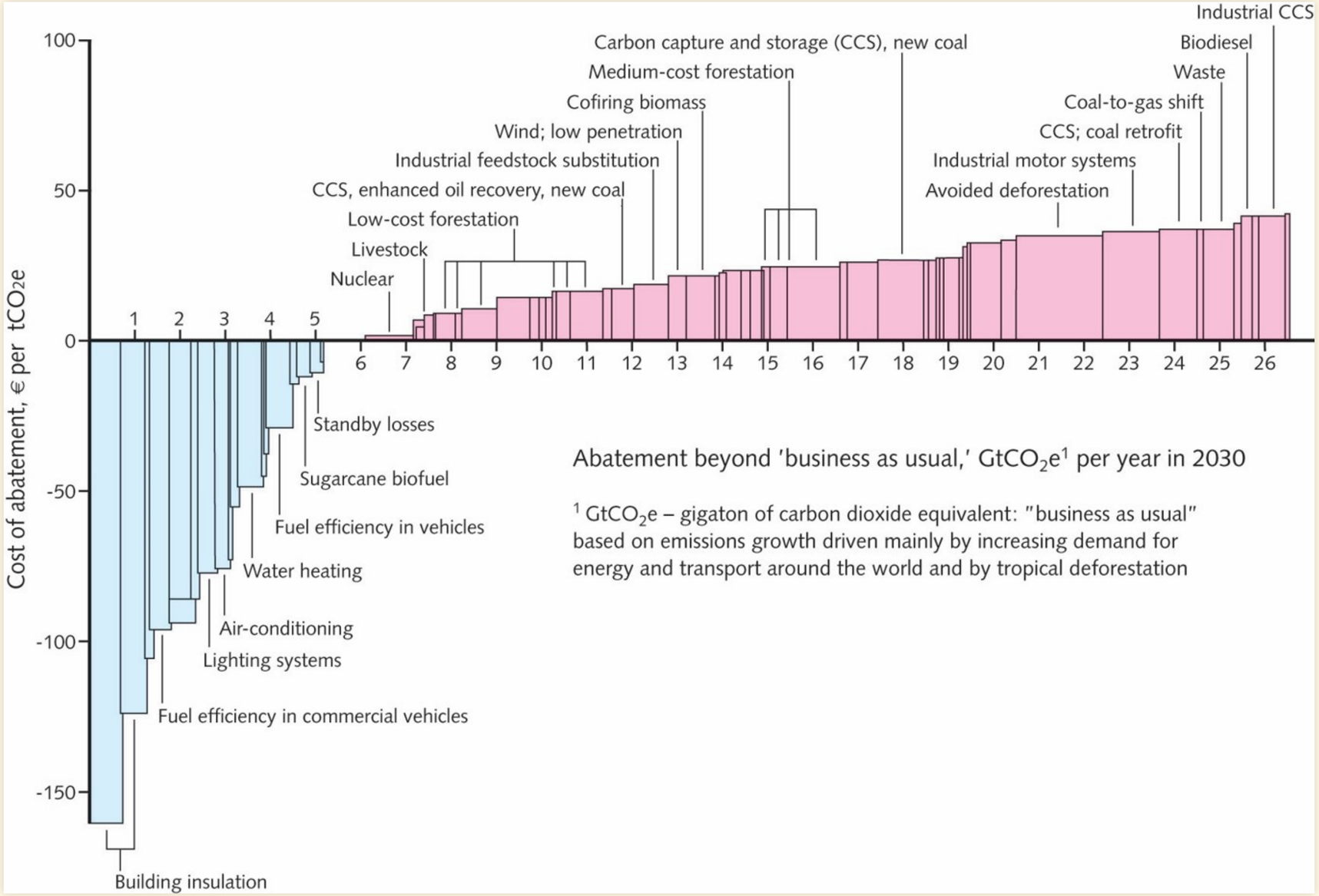
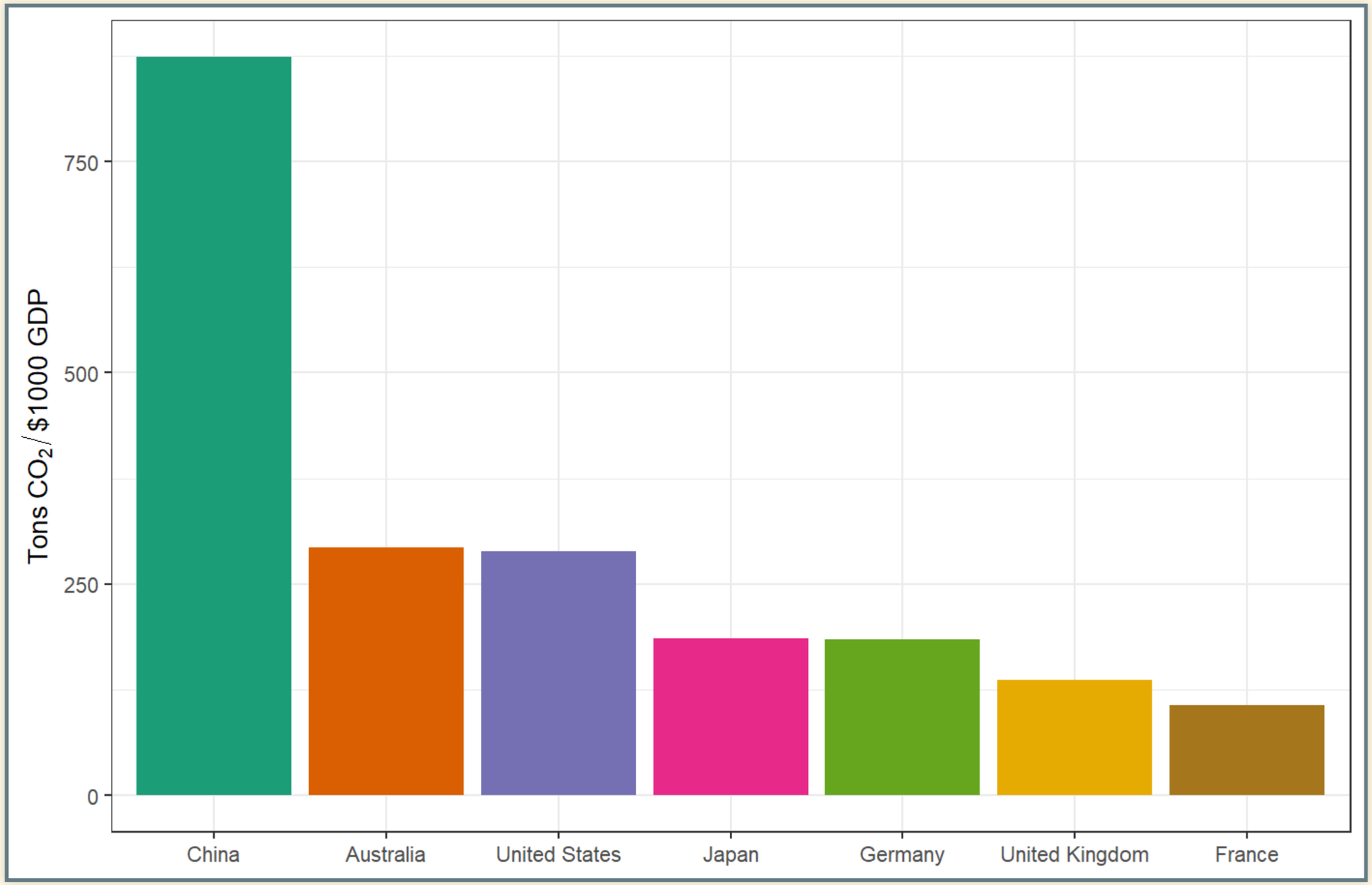
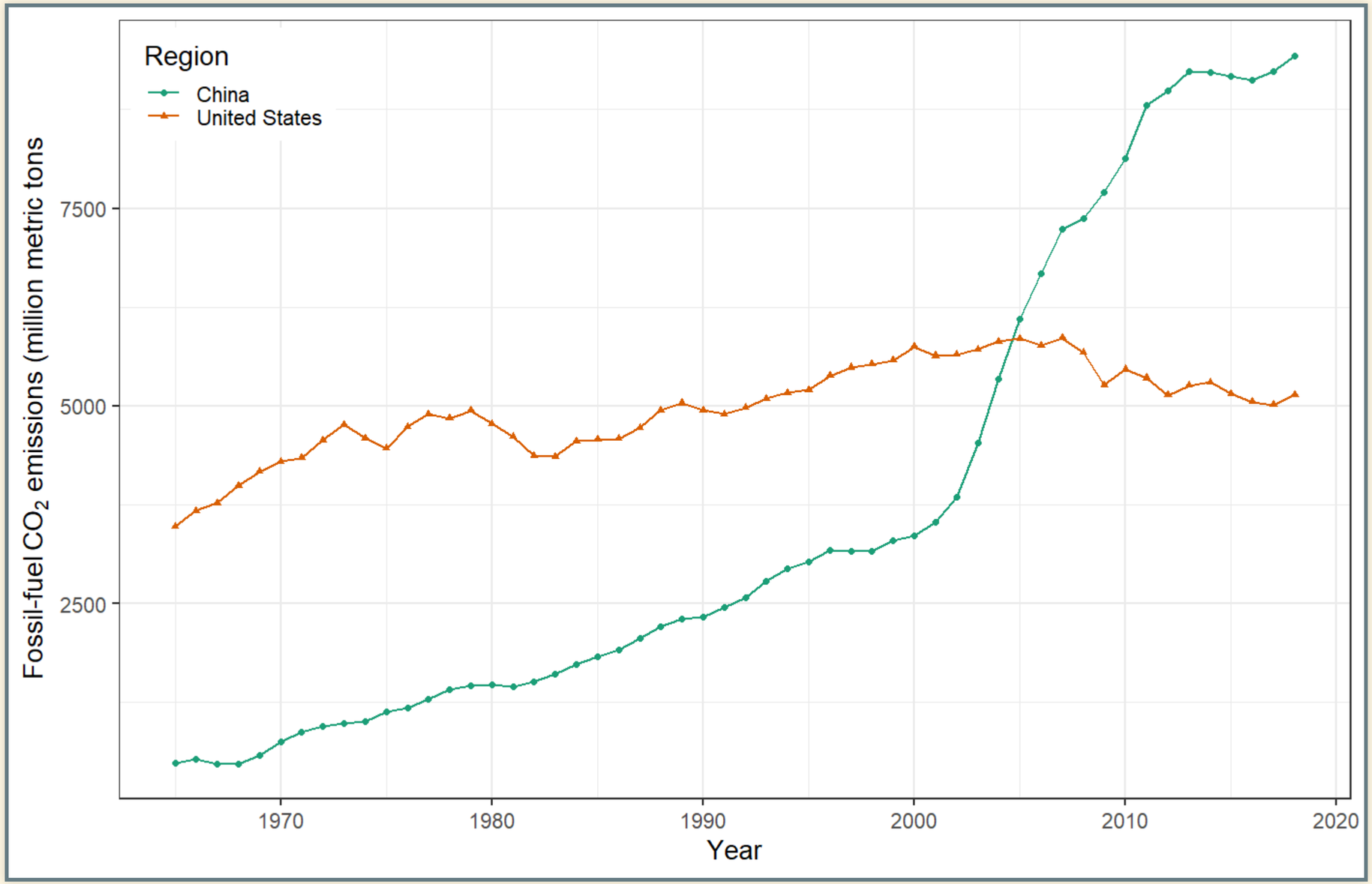


Image credit: McKinsey Global Institute

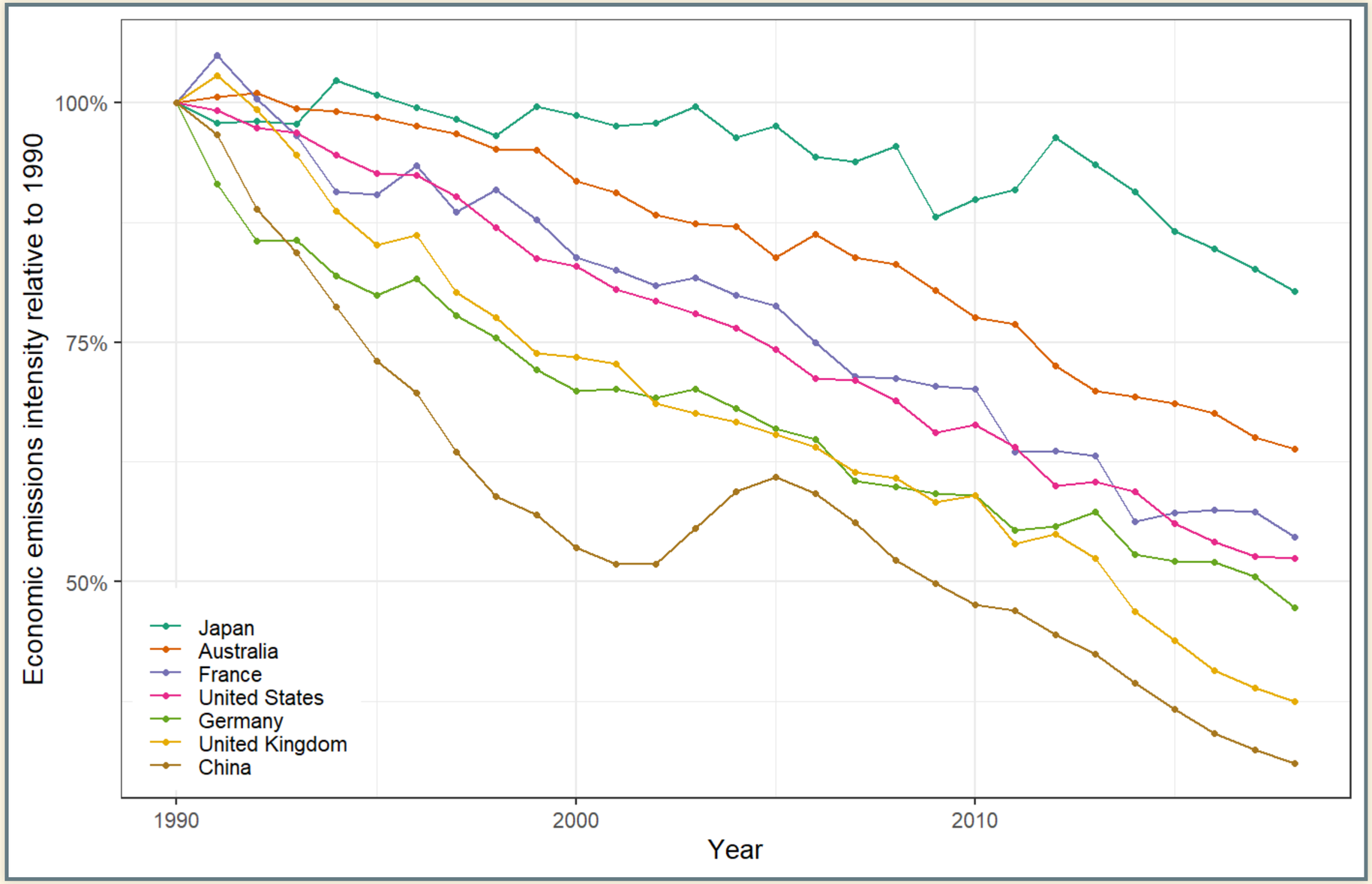
Economic Carbon Intensity in 2018



CO_2 Emissions 1965–2018



Relative improvement in carbon intensity 1990–2018

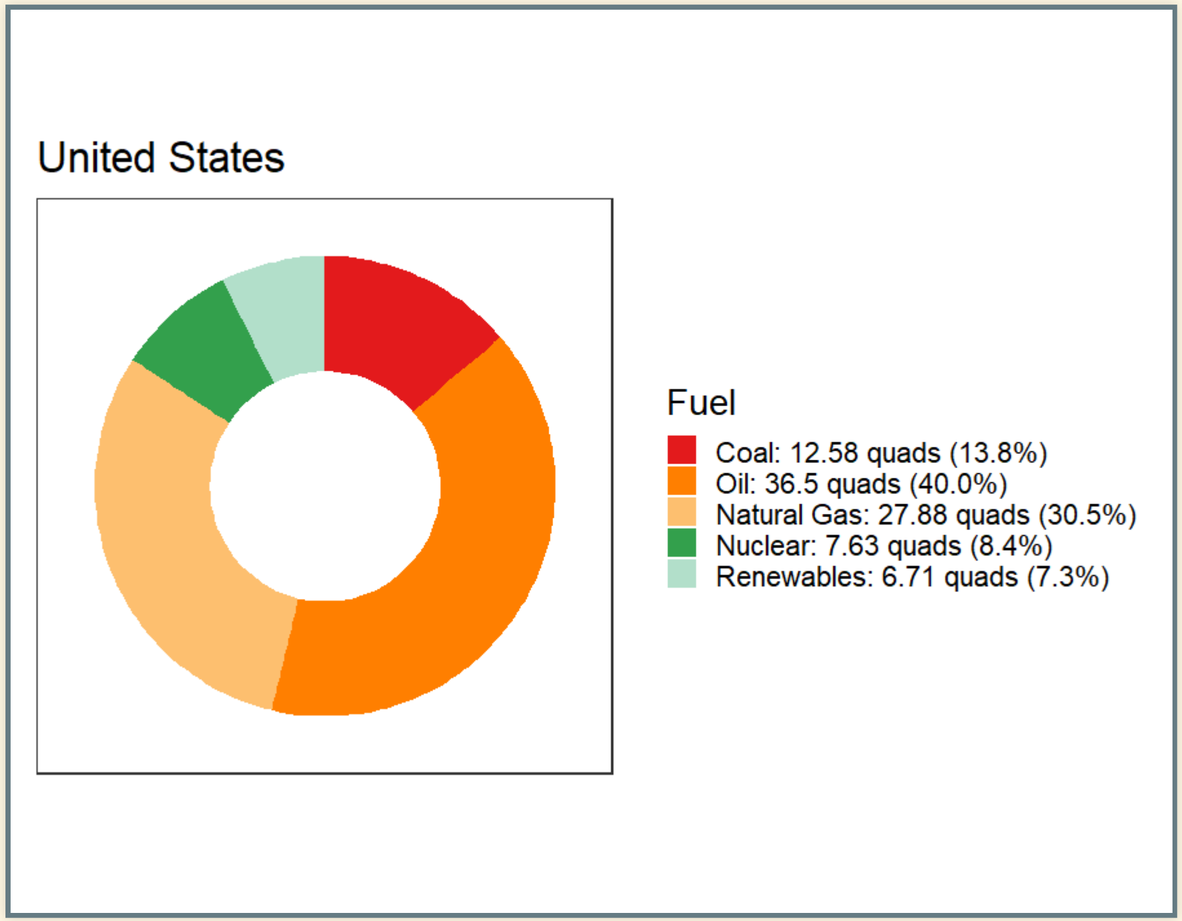


Top-Down Analysis for Green New Deal

Projected Energy Use in 2030

- Energy Information Administration top-down projection for energy demand in United States in 2030:
  - Total 2030 Primary Energy Use = 89.8 Quads
  - Assume P, g, and e are fixed.
  - Manage emissions by reducing f
    - Switch from fossil fuels to clean energy

Energy Mix in 2018



Fuel	Quads	%
Coal	12.6	14
Oil	36.5	40
Natural Gas	27.9	31
Nuclear	7.6	8
Renewables	6.7	7
Total	91.3	100

Emissions Factors

Fuel	MMT CO_2 per Quad
Coal	94
Oil	70
Natural Gas	53
Nuclear	0
Renewables	0

Projected Business as Usual Emissions in 2030

Fuel	%	Quads	MMT/Quad	MMT CO_2
Coal	14	12.4	94	1168
Oil	40	35.9	70	2514
Natural Gas	31	27.4	53	1457
Nuclear	8	7.5	0	0
Renewables	7	6.6	0	0
Total	100	89.8	NA	5139

Top-down emissions-reduction

Fuel	%	Quads	MMT/Quad	MMT CO_2
Coal	14	12.4	94	1168
Oil	40	35.9	70	2514
Natural Gas	31	27.4	53	1457
Nuclear	8	7.5	0	0
Renewables	7	6.6	0	0
Total	100	89.8	NA	5139

- Projected emissions for 2030 = 5139 MMT
  - If f doesn't change.
- Emissions goal for 2030 = 1492 MMT
- Must cut by (5139 − 1492) = 3647 MMT
- Start with coal:
  - Cut 1168 MMT (12.38 quads)
  - 2478 MMT left
- Next, cut gas:
  - Cut 1457 MMT (27.43 quads)
  - 1022 MMT left
- Finally, cut oil:
  - Cut 1022 MMT (14.59 quads)
- Total energy cuts = 12.38 + 27.43 + 14.59 = 54.40 quads.

Clean Energy Sources

- 11,000 megawatts (MW) for one year = 1 quad
  - (See Climate Fix, p. 97)
- **Nuclear Power Plant**:
  - 1000 MW × 75% capacity factor = **750 MW average**
  - 1 quad per year = 11,000 MW / (750 MW per nuclear plant) = **14.7 nuclear plants**
- **Solar Photovoltaic**:
  - 30 MW × 30% capacity factor = **9 MW average**
  - **1 quad = 1,200 photovoltaic solar farms**
- **Wind Turbine**:
  - 2.5 MW × 30% capacity factor = **1 MW average**
  - **1 quad = 15,000 wind turbines**

Meeting Green New Deal Goal

- Cut CO_2 by 3647 MMT
  - 1168 MMT from coal (12.4 quad)
  - 1457 MMT from gas (27.4 quad)
  - 1022 MMT from oil (14.6 quad)
- Total clean energy needed: quads per year

- 54 quads × 15 nuclear plants/quad =
  800 nuclear power plants in 12 years
  (67 per year)
- 54 quads × 1,200 photovoltaic solar farms/quad =
  65,000 photovoltaic solar farms in 12 years
  (5,000 per year, or 100 per week)
- 54 quads × 15,000 wind plants/quad =
  816,000 wind turbines in 12 years
  (68,000 per year, or 190 per day)

Pielke’s Bottom Line

- Unfeasible to build so much clean energy so quickly
- Expense of building so much clean energy would defeat economic goals
- This is why we don’t have the technology to decarbonize as quickly as politicians and activists have been promising.

But ...

- Renewable energy is getting cheaper very quickly
- It may soon be profitable to shut down existing fossil-fuel power plants and replace them with renewables.

Review

Bottom-Up Analysis

- Start with individual Kaya-identity variables:
  - P, g, e, f
  - Figure out historical rates of change for each
- Gross Domestic Product: $G = P \times g$
  - Rate of change of G: $r_G = r_P + r_g$
  - Rate of change of a product is the sum of the rates of change of the factors.
  - Use rate of change of G to extrapolate G in the future

Bottom-Up Analysis

- Start with individual Kaya-identity variables
- Start with the policy goal: change in F.
  - Figure out implied rate of change of emissions r_F.
- Compare to the expected rate of change of GDP r_G.
- Calculate the implied rate of decarbonizing the economy, r_{ef}:

$$r_{ef} = r_F - r_G$$

- Compare implied r_{ef} to the historical trend in ef to assess the difficulty of meeting the policy goals.

Top-Down Analysis

- Start with macroeconomic estimate of future energy demand *E*
- Use mix of energy sources and emissions factors to calculate future emissions (*F*) if the mix of energy sources does not change.
- Your policy has a a goal for *F*
- Calculate difference between projected future *F* and policy goal for *F*.
- Calculate how many **quads of fossil-fuel energy** you would have to replace with clean energy to meet the policy goal.
  - Start with cutting coal, then cut natural gas, and finally cut oil
  - Why?
- Figure out how many power plants of different kinds you would have to build to supply the necessary clean energy.